

MULTIPLE DISABILITIES

I. DEFINITION

"Multiple disabilities" means concomitant impairments (such as mental retardation blindness, mental retardation-orthopedic impairment, etc.), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf blindness.

II. POSSIBLE REFERRAL CHARACTERISTICS

For a child to be identified as having multiple disabilities (MD) he/she must exhibit two (2) or more disabilities. Referral should be based on the observation of a combination of the characteristics outlined in the eligibility criteria section of this document.

III. SCREENING INFORMATION

A. Required

1. Hearing
2. Vision

B. Recommended

1. Formal (If appropriate)
 - a. As indicated by the eligibility criteria for each category of suspected disability
2. Informal
 - a. Checklists
 - b. Rating scales
 - c. Anecdotal records
 - d. Basic skills inventories
 - e. Sociometric techniques
 - f. Observation

IV. REQUIRED EVALUATION DATA

A systematic in-depth assessment of the child shall be conducted in terms of medical (including neurological, when indicated), psychological and educational needs by a multidisciplinary team. When a child's disabilities are so complex that the administering of formal diagnostic measures is considered inappropriate and/or invalid, then a functional skills assessment should be conducted using an ecological inventory as its basis. Direct observation of the child by the team may also provide valuable assessment data. When formal, standardized assessments can be administered, the requirements for each suspected disability must be followed. Body positioning prior to commencement of any assessment procedure is critical. Children with motoric involvement may have involuntary movements and will require appropriate positioning to optimize their ability to attend to and/or perform tasks.

- A. Social History**
- B. Individual Intelligence (One required)**
- C. Individual Achievement (One required)**
- D. Adaptive Behavior (One required)**
- E. Communicative Abilities (Both receptive and expressive required)**
- F. Other**
 - 1. Learning processes (Required--each area of suspected deficit must be assessed)**
 - a. Visual perception**
 - b. Auditory perception**
 - c. Perceptual-motor development**
 - 2. Functional skills assessment (Required if formal, standardized assessments cannot be administered) Functional skills assessment is evaluating the ability of an individual to perform the activities required on a daily basis in his/her natural environments. Functional skills assessment is based on information obtained from observations and interviews with family members, teachers, related services personnel and/or the student via an ecological inventory. The ecological inventory is then used to identify the skills that are needed in specific settings in which the individual currently functions and will function in the future.**

3. Medical
 - a. Physical examination
 - b. Specialized, if indicated

V. OPTIONAL EVALUATION DATA

- A. Motor Development (Fine and gross motor)
- B. Vocational

VI. EVALUATION DATA ANALYSIS

To obtain a comprehensive picture of a child's abilities, all assessment information gathered must be integrated. All areas assessed must be fully considered to determine (1) if two or more clinical conditions of disability are present, the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments; (2) the child's present functional levels; and (3) strengths and weaknesses for learning.

VII. PROGRAMMING CONSIDERATIONS

The goal of a comprehensive program for children with multiple disabilities should be one of increasing their independence. The functional skills assessment will identify the areas of need and provide the structure to address those areas. The first skills to be taught are those which the child needs most often in order to function more independently in the least restrictive environment. Some of the issues to consider when making skill selections are: student health and safety, future programs, level of independence, age appropriateness and logistics of instruction.

In developing the child's IEP, it will be necessary to consider the need for instruction across several areas of learning, such as sensory development, motor skills, communication skills, cognition, social development, self-care, daily living and community living activities, recreation/leisure time and vocational skills. For the child to benefit from specialized instruction, it may be necessary for some students to receive appropriate related services.

In implementing an educational program, attention should be given to the instructional techniques used, the functionality of the skills taught and the age-appropriateness of the instructional materials and activities used.